

IN THE CLAIMS

The status of the claims is as follows:

1.-33. (Canceled)

34. (New) For use in a wireless network comprising a plurality of base stations capable of communicating with a plurality of mobile stations in a coverage area of said wireless network, a mobile switching center capable of distributing messages to a plurality of visitor location register units, said mobile switching center comprising:

a controller capable of receiving a first message associated with a first one of said plurality of mobile stations, embedding an address associated with a first one of said visitor location register units in a temporary identification number in said first message, and sending said first message to said first visitor location register unit.

35. (New) The mobile switching center as set forth in Claim 34, wherein said controller is further capable of assigning said first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with said first mobile station.

36. (New) The mobile switching center as set forth in Claim 35, wherein said controller assigns said first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with said first mobile station in order to perform load-sharing of messages across said plurality of visitor location register units.

37. (New) The mobile switching center as set forth in Claim 35, wherein said controller assigns said first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with said first mobile station when said first mobile station first accesses said wireless network.

38. (New) The mobile switching center as set forth in Claim 35, wherein said controller is further capable of assigning said temporary identification number to said first mobile station.

39. (New) The mobile switching center as set forth in Claim 38, wherein said temporary identification number comprises a Temporary Mobile Station Identification (TMSI) number.

40. (New) The mobile switching center as set forth in Claim 38, wherein said temporary identification number comprises an International Mobile Station Identification (IMSI) number.

41. (New) A wireless network comprising:

a plurality of base stations capable of communicating with a plurality of mobile stations in a coverage area of said wireless network;

a plurality of visitor location register units; and

a mobile switching center capable of distributing messages to said plurality of visitor location register units, said mobile switching center comprising:

a controller capable of receiving a first message associated with a first one of said plurality of mobile stations, embedding an address associated with a first one of said visitor location register units in a temporary identification number in said first message, and sending said first message to said first visitor location register unit.

42. (New) The wireless network as set forth in Claim 41, wherein said controller is further capable of assigning said first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with said first mobile station.

43. (New) The wireless network as set forth in Claim 42, wherein said controller assigns said first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with said first mobile station in order to perform load-sharing of messages across said plurality of visitor location register units.

44. (New) The wireless network as set forth in Claim 42, wherein said controller assigns said first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with said first mobile station when said first mobile station first accesses said wireless network.

45. (New) The wireless network as set forth in Claim 42, wherein said controller is further capable of assigning said temporary identification number to said first mobile station.

46. (New) The wireless network as set forth in Claim 45, wherein said temporary identification number comprises a Temporary Mobile Station Identification (TMSI) number.

47. (New) The wireless network as set forth in Claim 46, wherein said temporary identification number comprises an International Mobile Station Identification (IMSI) number.

48. (New) For use in a mobile switching center of a wireless network comprising a plurality of base stations capable of communicating with a plurality of mobile stations in a coverage area of the wireless network, a method of distributing messages to a plurality of visitor location register units comprising the steps of:

receiving in the mobile switching center a first message associated with a first one of the plurality of mobile stations;

embedding an address associated with a first one of the visitor location register units in a temporary identification number in the first message; and
sending the first message to the first visitor location register unit.

49. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 48, further comprising the step of assigning the first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with the first mobile station.

50. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 49, wherein the step of assigning assigns the first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with the first mobile station in order to perform load-sharing of messages across said plurality of visitor location register units.

51. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 49, wherein the step of assigning assigns the first visitor location register unit to process messages associated with the first mobile station when the first mobile station first accesses the wireless network.

52. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 49, further comprising the step of assigning the temporary identification number to the first mobile station.

53. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 52, wherein the temporary identification number comprises a Temporary Mobile Station Identification (TMSI) number.

54. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 52, wherein the temporary identification number comprises an International Mobile Station Identification (IMSI) number.